

INTERNAL USE ONLY

5 June 1969

Mr. Bannerman and Mr. Coffey:

STAT

[] and I attended the Annual Conference of Federal Records Management Officers at Ocean City, Maryland, May 26 through 28, 1969. The theme of the conference was "Data Compaction". A copy of the program is attached. There were about 60 people in attendance representing about 35 different agencies of government. Most of the speakers were from private enterprise although we had one from HEW, one from the Social Security Administration, and a couple from the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) on the last day.

The theme of the conference grew out of NARS' concern with the increasing quantities of magnetic tape being stored by Federal Agencies in Federal Records Centers. While they still have no absolute proof, the current estimates are that the shelf life of tape in storage is less than 15 years, probably about 10-12 years. It may be less than that if storage conditions are less than ideal. Most of the conference, therefore, dealt with conversion of the content of magnetic tapes to photographic storage media for long term retention and rapid search and retrieval. This will be very useful and helpful for the long term but does not contribute a great deal directly to the solution of our present storage problem. We plan to make the information we collected available to the other Directorates and work with them as they begin to develop plans for their long term storage requirements for information contained in magnetic tapes. The fact that magnetic tape and all kinds of microforms are considered to be record material within the scope of responsibility of records management programs is a key factor from our point of view and one which will require more of our attention than we have thus far given it.

The most important theme running through all of the presentations in terms of our storage problem is that none of these systems is sold for the recovery of storage space. Each of the representatives of the companies which have developed or are selling these products make the point that their utility must be measured in terms of the problems to be solved and the benefits to be derived for the total system of which they are to become a part. Success of the installations is entirely dependent upon the adequacy of the definition of the problem and the system analysis and design. The point was made several times that the key to proper use of microform systems is in the

ADMINISTRATIVE
INTERNAL USE ONLY

INTERNAL USE ONLY

accurate, objective appraisal of their suitability as information storage, dissemination, and retrieval mechanisms in the system which has the problem. If files are basically poorly organized - if they require browsing to search - miniaturization will only complicate the process. The point was also made that microfilm readers are used primarily for accessing and selecting material retrieved rather than for study and digestion. This of course means that microfilm systems must include reproduction equipment capable of furnishing the user with complete hard copy text. Experience also proves that microform systems will be used by the customer in direct proportion to the accessibility of the stored material, the adequacy of the indexing and reference system, and the degree to which the peripheral equipment selected serves the basic purposes of the system and the user.

Eighty percent of the work to install such a system must be done in the problem definition, analysis and design phases. Filming costs are the least of the system costs. In addition to the costs of problem definition and design, 80% of the system cost, there are costs for peripheral equipment such as readers, printers, and the like.

Design of microfilm systems must consider such factors as: The nature of the information: what are the input sources and where are they located; when and where is the input generated; what kind of time frames relate to the input, storage, and retrieval requirements of the system. Organization of the information: how must it be indexed or how must it be reorganized to make it indexable and retrievable. Location of the information: how much is needed where in what time frames. The size of the information unit: letter size documents; legal size; engineering drawing, etc.

In addition to the presentations relating to technical state of the art there were a couple of talks by representatives of NARS pleading with the agency representatives to help them with their storage problems which bear a remarkable resemblance to ours.

a. NARS figures it costs them 30 cents per cubic foot per year to maintain records on the shelf without servicing them.

b. There are about 28 million cubic feet of records on hand in Federal Records Centers and there are 10 million references per year. There has been an 8 percent increase in the volume of records stored during the past 2 years which compares with a rate of increase of about 1 percent per year during previous years.

ADMINISTRATIVE
INTERNAL USE ONLY


ADMINISTRATIVE
INTERNAL USE ONLY

c. About 40 percent of the records in the Federal Records Centers now are unscheduled - indefinite retention.

d. Document-by-document screening of records pays only if it results in 50 percent disposal. It is uneconomic to screen if it results in less than 50 percent destruction.

e. The Records Center at Suitland, originally planned for 10 years, is expected to be filled in another 18 months.

NARS is creating a task force to work with the agencies to schedule the unscheduled, reduce retention periods, and overhaul disposal schedules. They are examining legislation to determine whether changes in retention periods prescribed by law should be considered. They have records centers under construction now and more on the drawing boards.


Chief, Support Services Staff

STAT



Attachment

DDS/SSS/ (5 June 1969)

Distribution:

- Orig & 1 - Adse w/att
- 1 - SSS Subject
- 1 - SSS Chrono

STAT

7/2/69 - Copy sent to C/A + Rectr, w/ copy of IPC memo by  dtd
7/2/69 - CC Ltrd to RAB personnel  9/69

ADMINISTRATIVE